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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: HUNGARIAN SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO AFGHANISTAN

REF: STATE 31102

Classified By: Acting P/E Counselor Jon Martinson, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) In a meeting April 16 with MFA NATO Section Chief Peter Szataray and an April 17 meeting with MOD Policy State Secretary Jozsef Bali to discuss reftel, both first emphasized that GOH commitments for Afghanistan will depend on updated budget guidance from newly elected Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai's government. Stating that the Hungarian PRT remains the number one priority, Szataray said that the MFA/MOD/Justice Ministries have prepared a draft proposal to extend the current PRT mandate through the fall 2010. The MFA will submit the draft to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) for a decision. Bali said that the PMO-level meeting is scheduled for April 29. Although no Parliamentary vote is required to extend the mandate, the PM will coordinate with the five Parliamentary parties in advance of the decision.

¶2. (C) Bali and Szataray provided the following comments related to the specific reftel requests to the GOH:

- OMLTs and Police Mentoring Teams, including trainers for the Afghan National Army Air Corps

The MOD continues to support the deployment of the joint Ohio National Guard/Hungarian Army OMLT, with a second rotation scheduled in August. Although Hungary earlier committed to deploy a second OMLT in late 2009 or early 2010, that planned deployment may depend on available funding. Bali stressed that no final decision has been made concerning the second OMLT, but the GOH goal is to meet its commitments. Bali also noted that the MOD has offered MI-35 pilots and associated personnel to train Afghan military personnel, with the understanding that the planned training operation will be placed under the ISAF umbrella.

- Critical enablers (e.g. helicopters, engineers)

Bali stated that the MOD has recently received funding via the British/French proposal to upgrade two MI-17 helicopters. He said that the MOD plans to provide the requirements to NATO/NAMSA to initiate a tender for the overhaul, noting that the MOD believes these upgrades would be cheaper in Ukraine rather than in Russia. Bali stressed that the NAMSA tender will be a prerequisite for the program to go forward, in order to avoid any transparency/corruption issues. He also noted as a second prerequisite, the requirement for a multi-national logistics program to support the helicopters' deployment, as Hungary would not be able to fund a full logistics support package for two helicopters. Estimating approximately 12 months for the helicopter overhauls, Bali said the MOD anticipates their deployment in the fall 2010 for two years.

- Provide road/bridge construction experts and equipment

Bali commented that the HDF has reduced a significant portion of its inventory and therefore would not be able to provide equipment. However, he said that plans are already underway to deploy one officer and one NCO to provide instruction on road/bridge construction at the Afghan military's engineering school.

- Increased support for governance and to develop programs at PRTs, including additional civilian experts with access to programming funds.

Sztaray noted that there is no decision yet on development funds for Afghanistan, however cuts are likely, limiting their capability in the civilian development sphere. That said, Sztaray noted that the MFA plans to work with the governments of Greece and Japan, as well as with the EU, to source additional funding for civilian development projects.

13. (C) Comment. With PM Bajnai projecting 600 billion forint (USD 3 billion) spending cuts this year and up to 900 billion (USD 4.5 billion) next year, the MFA and MOD face significant budget reductions. While some interlocutors have already indicated that the second, Hungarian-only OMLT deployment schedule later this year has already been canceled, we await confirmation once the MOD reviews the upcoming budget adjustments. Hungary's current commitments in Afghanistan with the PRT, the joint OMLT and the Special Forces unit (without caveats) in our view, is placing them at the high end of their capabilities where they routinely exceed the parliamentary agreed-to-limit of 1,000 deployed forces. That said, with their proposed MI-17 and MI-35 helicopter deployments, they are still looking for ways to be a force provider. On the civilian side, the MFA's efforts to enhance their contributions face funding shortfalls, as well as a cadre of experts who can be deployed. We anticipate that the GOH will continue to look to NGOs on the ground in Afghanistan to provide much of this capability.

Levine